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Housekeepers' Chat

Subject: "Modern Ways with Vegetables." Approved by Bureau of Home Economics,
U. S. D. A.

Bulletins available: "Aunt Sammy's Radio Recipes."

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How can we tell whether we are successful in preparing food for our families? By their appetites, Samantha, by their appetites. If your children are never eager for meals, if your husband looks bored when the dinner bell rings--then you may be sure something is wrong.

The trouble may be in careless cooking, or in monotonous meals. The same menu day after day, or the same method of preparing food, will curb even a lively appetite. Variety is needed for a satisfactory diet. Variety is often achieved only by careful planning, and some imagination.

Appearance of food counts in stimulating the appetite. Though garnishes may seem frivolous, they may make the difference between an appetizing dish and an uninteresting one. Salads, soups, sandwiches, and desserts may have endless variety in appearance, and should be prepared to appeal to the eye as well as to the palate.

Do you have sons and daughters of the 'teen age in your family? Very often their appetites may need special cultivating. To prevent a flagging appetite during these years, a simple diet is recommended; a simple diet, well-cooked and attractively served, which includes fresh fruit, vegetables, milk, whole bread and cereals, and omits candies and pastries.

And speaking of vegetables--I have a vegetable talk all prepared for you today. "Modern Ways with Vegetables" is the title. This is the talk:

Charlie Carrot and Sammy Spinach, not to mention Benny Broccoli, have come into their own. Chauncey Cabbage, who used to be considered quite a lowbrow, no doubt from his association with Corned Beef at Dinty Moore's eating place, is now becoming so big-headed that his hat will scarcely fit his head.

As for Bertha Brussels-Sprouts, and Charlotte Cauliflower--you can hardly blame them for putting on airs, when all the nutrition specialists are telling us how important they are, and how necessary it is that our daily diet include "two vegetables besides potatoes."

Sammy Spinach had quite a time, climbing the social ladder. A lot of people discovered there was sand in his family tree. And what a hue-and-cry they made!

Before he could get his name in the Vegetable Social Register, a method had to be devised, to get rid of the sand. As soon as that was done, and people learned how to cook this vegetable, Sammy Spinach was accepted.

Poor Channcey Cabbage suffered from an inferiority complex, till we learned that members of the Cabbage family can be cooked to a delicious stage, in a very short time.

"Two vegetables a day, besides potatoes." Wish I had a nickel, for every time I've made that statement. I'd buy an extra Christmas present, for Cousin Maude.

When the modern housewife cooks vegetables, she has a four-fold aim: to save their valuable food elements; to keep their natural color; to keep their natural form and texture as much as possible, that is, to keep them from falling apart; and to keep their natural flavor.

Let's consider the first one of these four aims: To cook vegetables so that we may save their valuable food elements. Remember what these are? Minerals and it vitamins. One good way to preserve the nutritive value of a vegetable is to bake in its skin, and eat the skin. Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, and squash are often baked. Cabbage, onions, and carrots can be baked, too. And cucumbers--remember the recipe for Stuffed Baked Cucumbers, in the Radio Cookbook?

Another good method of cooking vegetables, so as to conserve the food value, is to steam them.

Boiling is the method which results in the most loss, for the minerals, as well as some of the vitamins, are soluble in water. Potatoes and some other vegetables can be boiled in their jackets without losing much, however. Others, such as carrots, string beans, turnips, and cabbage, may be cut up and cooked in a small quantity of water. By the time the vegetable is tender, most of the water has evaporated, and what little is left may be served with it. Then very little of the mineral value is lost, although some of the elusive vitamins may have escaped. However, if we eat plenty of vegetables, and many kinds, we are almost certain to get a good supply of vitamins.

Another good way to save these precious food elements is not to soak your vegetables in cold water before you put them on to cook. Be sure that the water is boiling, when the vegetables are put in. Whenever possible, cook vegetables with the skins on.

Still another thing--the longer you cook your vegetables, the more food value they will lose. Over-cooking greatly increases the loss of vitamins and minerals, not to mention the harm it does to color, and texture, and flavor. Over-cooking is to blame for much of the prejudice against certain cooked vegetables.

Many vegetables can be cooked in a very short time. Young cabbage cooks in seven or eight minutes. Corn on the cob cooks in from seven to twelve minutes, according to its size. Brussels sprouts and cauliflower, if broken in flowerlets, will cook in ten to twelve minutes.

For my part, I'd much rather have a vegetable that is slightly underdone, than one which has been cooked till all the flavor and color and crispiness are boiled away.

Now I wonder whether I've forgotten anything I meant to tell you, about vegetables. Salt---I'm always forgetting the salt. Put the vegetables on in boiling salted water. And try to serve the vegetable as soon as it is cooked. If it can't be served immediately, let it cool, and then reheat it, just before serving time.

There are so many appetizing ways of preparing vegetables that I won't even begin describing them. I'd never get tomorrow's dinner ready for broadcasting, if I did. In the Radio Cookbook there are 40 vegetable recipes---but of course 40 recipes are a mere drop in the bucket when it comes to ways of serving vegetables.

Tomorrow: "A Man's Meal---Beefsteak and Fried Potatoes."

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